

[20 March, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BHOJYACHAKRAVARTY): (a) The Joint Rivers Commission in its meeting held at Dhaka in January, 2001 held discussions on the following issues:—

- (i) Sharing of Teesta Water.
- (ii) Formulation of Action Plan to combat the flood situation in both the countries.
- (iii) Submission of inspection report by Joint Inspection Team on Feeder Canal at Farakka when the flow in Ganga at Farakka is below, 60,000 cusec during the guarantee period.
- (iv) Technical and financial assistance to Government of Bangladesh for feasibility and detailed engineering works of the proposed Ganges Barrage Project in Bangladesh.
- (v) Exchange of technology in combating arsenic problems.
- (vi) Resolving border/common rivers problems by mutual consultations.

(b) and (c) Bilateral talks between India and Nepal relating to water resources development are going on since long. A Treaty concerning the integrated development of Mahakali river including Sarda Barrage, Tankapur Barrage and Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project was signed on 12.2.96 between Government of Nepal and Government of India. Besides this, the dialogue is also going on the Sapta Kosi and Sun Kosi Multipurpose Project. Recently, a Nepal-India Joint Committee on Water Resources (JCWR) headed by Water Resources secretaries has been formed in pursuance of the decisions taken by Prime Ministers of Nepal and India during the visit of Prime Minister of Nepal in August 2000, with a mandate to discuss all important issues pertaining to cooperation in the field of water resources sector including implementation of existing agreements/undertakings. This Committee has held its first meeting during 1-3rd October, 2000.

Contamination of water of Lower Gangetic Plain of West Bengal

2694. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the underground water in vast areas of lower Gangetic plain of West Bengal is severely contaminated with Arsenic beyond the permissible limit;

(b) if so, what remedial measures are being taken by Government;

(c) whether it is a fact that there has been reduction in assistance to the State Government in combating this menacing problem; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BUOYACHAKRAVARTY): (a) At present, arsenic contamination in ground water in the lower Gangetic Plain of West Bengal has been identified sporadically in a linear tract extending from southern part of Malda district (North of Ganga River) through Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts to the East of Bhagirathi and Bardhaman, Howrah and Hoogly districts to the West of Bhagirathi. At present c⁷ blocks of eight districts of West Bengal have been identified to have arsenic contamination in ground water more than the permissible limit of 0.05 mg/l.

(b) Action taken to contain the problem of arsenic contamination include the following:

(I) The State Government of West Bengal in collaboration with and financial support from the Government of India have sanctioned the following schemes;

- (i) A First Phase Action Plan at a cost of Rs. 858.33 lakh under which replacement of arsenic affected sport sources and big diameter tubewells have been completed and four water supply schemes commissioned.
- (ii) A surface water based piped water supply scheme has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs. 8848 lakh for Malda district
- (iii) A surface water based piped water supply scheme for arsenic affected areas of South 24 Parganas district has been sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs. 232.84 crore.
- (iv) Preparation of a prospective plan at a total cost of Rs. 750.00 crore including long term and short term measures to tackle arsenic contamination. Some of the salient features of the plan are—replacement of tubewells by deeper ones, construction of new piped water supply

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schemes; sanitary protected rig wells and rain water harvesting structures for immediate relief, establishment of surface water based piped water supply schemes and establishing new spot sources.

(2) The All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has undertaken epidemiological study in the arsenic affected areas.

(3) Several Research and Development projects have been sanctioned under the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission of the Ministry of Rural Development as indicated below:

- (i) Sub-Mission Project on arsenic pollution in ground water in West Bengal at a project cost of Rs. 10.82 lakh by the School of Tropical Medicines and AH India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health.
- (ii) Study of arsenic contamination in six districts of West Bengal at a project cost of Rs. 4.13 lakh.
- (iii) R&D project on epidemiological study for assessing toxicity in chronic arsenic affected areas at a project cost of Rs. 4.93 lakh. The study has been carried out by the Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research, Calcutta.
- (iv) R&D projects on control of arsenic and other chemical pollutants approved at a project cost of Rs. 74.00 lakh. The study has been entrusted to the Presidency College, Calcutta.
- (v) Development of low cost filtering medium for removal of arsenic from ground water at a project cost of Rs. 3.30 lakh. The study has been entrusted to the National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur.
- (vi) Study of geology and geo-chemistry of arsenic occurrences in ground water of six districts in West Bengal at a project cost of Rs. 4.78 lakh. The study has been entrusted to the Centre for study of Man and Environment, Calcutta for arsenic related diseases.

(c) No, Sir. (d) Does not arise.

Balance between output and input of ground water

2695. SHRI CO. POULOSE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state: